THE

MOSAIC ACCOUNT

OF

THE CREATION.

BY

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The substance of the following paper was originally given as a verbal communication, at the meeting of the Academy of Natural Sciences, on the 9th of May, 1854, in reply to the strictures of W. Parker Foulke, Esq., on the lecture of the late Hugh Miller, "The two Records—the Mosaic and the Geologic." It was the design of the Author to show, that Mr. Miller, so far from using the classification by geologists, of the rocks on the earth's surface into three great groups, the "*palæozoic, secondary*, and *tertiary*," to illustrate the striking coincidence between the two records, in an unauthorized manner, was perfectly justified in showing that this classification, *made without any reference to the Scriptures whatever*, yet, did, in a most wonderful manner, agree with them. He endeavored to show that by taking the most prominent fact in each of these periods, Mr. Miller had only followed the course which Moses had taken with each of the other, so-called, days. He had not stated, and did not intend to state, that these *were the only facts*, but that in each of them they were the most prominent and characteristic. Circumstances at the time prevented the author from writing out his remarks, for publication with those of Mr. Foulke, and no good opportunity occurred until the present summer, when they were published in the form now given, in the Presbyterian Quarterly Review. It has been a source of regret to the author, that they were not published at the time, as they would probably have saved the lamented Miller from the feeling expressed in the notes to his last work, "The Testimony of the Rocks," in regard to the remarks made by Mr. Foulke, which were certainly made in no unkind spirit towards Mr. M., for any such feeling was at the time most explicitly disclaimed.

The various methods by which theologians and geologists have sought to reconcile "the testimony of the rocks," and our version of the first chapter of Genesis, may all be reduced to two, or perhaps, three general schemes. The first one supposes, that between the first verse and the second there was an undefined and enormous interval of time, in which the various geological changes, such as we now find upon the earth, took place; that the earth was then brought into the chaotic state described in the second verse, and then it was, in six days of twenty-four hours each, prepared for the habitation of man, who was at that time placed upon it. This was the plan of reconciliation of Dr. Chalmers, and, with a single exception, that of Dr. John Pye Smith, who thought that the chaos described in the second verse, and the work of creation, in the rest of the chapter, extended over but a small part of the earth's surface, and that outside of that area, the rest of the earth continued to enjoy the light of the sun, and plants and animals lived, and grew, and have continued by an unbroken series of generations to our own times. The progress of geological discovery has caused the scheme of Dr. Chalmers to be laid aside, for it does not meet the wants of the case, and that of Dr. Smith is opposed to the record of Moses, in making no provision for the creation of the heavens.

The second method supposes, that the days were periods of great and indefinite extent, each embracing vast ages, in which the various geological changes

occurred. With some few modifications, this is now adopted by the great ma jority of modern geologists. There is little, if any, doubt that so far at leas as the length of the days is concerned, this scheme is strictly in consonanc with the meaning of the Scriptures. Almost all geologists and theologians however, commit the mistake of confining this description of the creation t the earth alone, although the sacred narrative as plainly asserts that "in th beginning God created the *heavens* and the earth," and at its close declares "thus the *heavens* and the earth were finished, and all the host of them."

Prof. Barrows, in commenting upon this verse says, that "Tuch remarks that this is the only passage in which the word *hosts* includes earthly object along with the heavenly host. It denotes the orderly marshalling and ar rangiug of all created things in heaven and earth." We have a right then t require that any system of interpretation which shall be presented to us fo adoption, shall accouut for the heavenly bodies, as well as the earth, and i will uot do, as we shall soon see, to confiue the sole description of their creatio to the work of the fourth day. Such an interpretation must not only accord witl geology, but likewise with astronomy. It must, in short, be so read as to giv us au accouut of the creation of the heavens, as well as of the earth.

Before proceeding to examine and determine the meaning of the Mosaic re cord, we may premise, that that interpretation which, fairly made, accordin to those rules by which we iuterpret all language, shall best harmonize witl all the facts, is most likely to be the true one, even though it may be ver different from the one which we have been accustomed to regard as correct If it best agrees with all the phenomena, we ought not to reject it on accoun of uovelty, and assume that it cannot be truo, because so many learned an wise scholars, on whose opinions we have been accustomed to rely, have give a different reading. It may be, that they have never examined it from th right point of view, to attain the knowledge of its meaning.

We will now proceed with our undertaking. Verse 1st. "In the beginnin God created the heavens and the earth." Prof. Lewis has employed a larg part of the sixth chapter of his Six Days of Creation, in proving that the wor trauslated *create*, does not mean to bring into existence from nothing, but ra ther to arrange matter previously existing. It seems, however, more reasona ble to think that it was the design of Moses, to teach, in opposition to thos who believed in and taught the eternity of matter, that it was created by th power of God. In fact, the absolutely literal translation of the verse convey exactly this idea.

In our version, the particle אֵת which means *the substance of*, is not trans lated; were it rendered, the verse would read thus: "In the beginning Go created the substance of the heavens and the earth." The authorities for thi reading are many and important. Dr. Wilson, in his Easy Introduction t the Knowledge of Hebrew without the Points, in a note on this word says "This particle following an active verb, and going before a noun which ha the servile ה prefixed, admits of no translation unless we render it 'the sub stance of.' Here the sense will allow it, which is rarely the case." So Har ris, in his Pre-Adamite Earth, in a note on this first verse, says, "accordin to the Rabbins, the verse should be rendered, 'God in the beginning created the substance of the heavens and the substance of the earth.' They under stand אֵת here to mean the substance or material. The Syriac translatio gives the same sense. Compare Gesenius on this word; Aben Ezra; Kimch in his Book of Roots, and Buxtorf's Talmudic Lexicon."

The adoption of this reading throws light upon the subsequent verse, an assists us to understand more clearly its meaning.

Verse 2d. "And the earth was without form and void, and darkness wa upou the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of th waters."

"It has been held that the particle translated *and* in this verse, does no necessarily imply a direct connection between this verse and the first, and tha an immense period of time may have elapsed between them. Barrows an others, have, however, shown conclusively that this is erroneous, and that i

as here its proper power as a direct copulative. This is also evident from he verse itself. What is the object of this verse? Is it not to describe the ondition or state of the substance of the heavens and the earth, the creation f which has just been affirmed? Prof. Lewis says, "'without form and void' re expressions, the one referring to utter irregularity of dimensions, and outvard extent, the other to the deficiency of gravity; denoting, not so much an bsolute as a relative want of weight, in other words, a fluid or rarified condiion, with an absence of all cohesion or solidity, or it may be a huge nebulosiy," &c.; and again, "the תְּהוֹם or *deep* is evidently the תֹהוּ, *without form*, mentioned before. It is etymologically different, and yet the word as here used, can be only another name for the chaos, though afterwards employed to denote other objects which the imagination might regard as presenting some resemblance to the primeval waste." The word *waters*, in this verse, is also used to designate the same as the deep. We would here also remark that the word מְרַחֶפֶת, rendered *moved upon*, is in the Hiphil conjugation, and is therefore causative, and would be more properly rendered *caused motion in*. The phrase *the face of*, is idiomatical and answers to our word *throughout*. We can now understand the meaning of the verse. Moses is describing, in his masterly manner, by a few bold expressions, the appearance of the matter of whose creation he had just spoken. It was formless and void, or filling all space and without any cohesion or solidity; it was all dark; and a motion caused by the Spirit of God pervaded it. The Creator now proceeds to form this formless and void matter into those bodies which he had from eternity designed. The first act was the endowing a part of this dark matter with luminous properties. Verse 3d. "And God said, let there be light, and there was light." The language used does not imply a new creation of matter, but simply giving to matter already created luminous power.

Verse 4th. "And God saw the light that it was good, and God divided between the light and the darkness." The expression, God saw that it was good, does not imply moral goodness, but that it was fitted for the designed end, the purpose for which he formed it. This remark applies also to each place in the chapter in which the expression occurs. The word here rendered *divided*, expresses a gradual act, such as the separation of two dissimilar substances would be; how this separation was finally effected we shall presently see.

Verse 5th. "And God called the light day, and the darkness he called night; and the evening and the morning were the first day," or literally, "evening was, morning was, one day." The name *day* is here used evidently in a different sense, in the first part of the verse, from what it is in the last. In the first part, it undoubtedly is a name given to the light to designate its special character. Gesenius and others derive it from a root, which signifies to be warm, hot, to glow with heat, and therefore its signification as a name will be, that which produces heat, or the warmth-producer; a name which fairly expresses its principal character, and is in this respect like our word *caloric*, with which it seems to be identical in meaning; so also the term *night* is here used, not to designate a portion of time, but as the name of the dark or non-luminous matter from which the luminous had been, in this work of the first day, separated. It is, says Wilson, derived from the root לוּל, signifying to turn to, or towards, to move around, and as a name would be, the moving around matter.

In the latter part of the verse, the term *day* means a period of time. The true meaning of this word here, has been one of the chief difficulties in the way of the interpretation of this chapter. Many have contended that it means in this place, a period of twenty-four hours, or what we call a natural day, and their main argument has been the reference to the work of creation in the fourth commandment. They contend that God, in the reason which is there given for hallowing the seventh day, settles this point, that the days of creation were natural days. Now, there is no fact more evident than that the word day is used in the Scriptures in a variety of senses, one of which we have in

the first part of this verse, where it certainly has no reference whatever to time or duration. When it does mean duration or time, it is by no means restricted to the meaning contended for; on the contrary it has so many different ones, that we can only determine it from the context. The instances of these are numerous. In the next chapter we are told in the fourth verse, "these are the generations of the heavens and the earth,—in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens." Here the term day includes the whole six days of the creation. So, when Job says, "turn from him that he may accomplish, as an hireling, his day," he uses it to express the lifetime of a man. When our Saviour said to the Jews, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day," he used it to designate the period of his appearance upon earth. We have also the prophetic use of the word for a year, and many other uses of the same character, so that we can only determine the meaning of the word from the context. Prof. Lewis says, "the Hebrews use the word יוֹם *day*, for any period of time, presenting a complete course or unity of events, irrespective of precise duration. There can be no doubt at all of such usage." We would reply to the argument for the limitation of time in the fourth commandment. that we are told in the next chapter, that God rested from his work on the seventh day, and blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. Now we wish those who contend for this limitation of the *six* days, to tell us when the seventh day ended, and when God ceased to rest from his work. The term Sabbath is also used to signify a rest of more than a natural day. It is so used in the Levitical law to designate the Sabbath of the land, or every seventh year, and in other places. The meaning of the word *day* is unquestionably limited by the context, and in each subsequent passage to the series of completed events with which it is connected. Here the context limits it to the period from the creation of matter to the separation of light matter from the dark matter; and as no sun was yet in existence, it could not have been a day measured by it.

Verses 6th, 7th, and 8th. "And God said let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament, from the waters which were above the firmament, and it was so. And God called the firmament, heaven: and the evening and the morning were the second day." There is no part of the account of the creation that has more puzzled commentators.

Perhaps it is not possible to find any exposition of this work of the second day, that has yet been given, that when fairly examined does not involve a downright absurdity. We will mention two examples of these; one given by Cruden, the author of the Concordance, as the understanding of divines in regard to it in the year 1737, and the other by Prof. Barrows, of Andover, in the year 1856. "The word used," says Cruden, "is רָקִיעַ, which is translated expansion, something expanded, or firmament, something firm and solid. By this word, the Hebrews understood the heavens, which, like a solid and immense arch (though it be soft and liquid) served as a bank and barrier between the upper and the lower waters; and that the stars were set in this arch like so many precious stones in gold and silver, when firmament is taken for the starry heaven; then by upper waters, is meant that sea or collection of waters placed by God above all the visible heavens, and there reserved for ends known to himself. If by firmament we understand the air called the expansion because it is extended far and wide, and the firmament, because it is fixed in its proper place, from whence it cannot be moved unless by force; then by superior waters are to be understood the waters in the clouds; and these may be said to be above the firmament of air, because they are above a considerable part of it."

Prof. Barrows, of Andover, says: "In this azure vault (the sky) God has placed the heavenly bodies; the fowls fly above the earth on its face; that is, along under it, as if skimming its surface, and it constitutes a permanent division between the waters above and below itself. The waters under the firmament are those on the earth's surface. The waters above the firmament are not directly the clouds, but rather that invisible store-house of waters whence

e clouds are, from age to age, supplied. Such seems to be the representation the sacred writer. And now, what is there in this at which modern science an justly take offence? Is it that he describes the firmament as an outspread ault, in which are placed the sun, moon, and stars? Is it that he places an exhaustible reservoir of water above our heads? That God has such a reervoir there, is certain; for he has been pouring down rain from it for six housand years, and it is not yet spent!" Certainly, this is almost equal to the hild's idea of the sky; "A great blue curtain drawn overhead, with holes in to let the glory of heaven through." A very beautiful idea for a child. We nswer the professor's question seriously, in the words of Hugh Miller—"that hilology cannot be sound which would commit the Scriptures to a science hat cannot be true."

The difficulty arises here from an entire mistake as to the meaning of רָקִיעַ, nd the waters here mentioned. The word is derived from a root which means o expand, to spread abroad, and, as a noun, it may be rendered expansion. Now, what is the meaning here of expansion? Is it not a division of the formess and space-filling mass into different parts, and by an interval or expansion hat can be measured from one to another? In other words, the matter of the niverse was now divided into all those parts which, by their consolidation on he succeeding day, were to form not only our earth, but all the heavenly boies. This gives us an intelligent idea of what the work of the second day vas. It was the divisiou of the matter formed in the beginning, and on the irst day divided into two great classes, the light and the dark, into those innumerable parts wbich were to form the heavens and the heaven of heavens.

Verses 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, and 13th. "Aud God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together into one place, and let the dry appear, and it was so; and God called the dry, earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he seas; and God saw that it was good. Aud God said Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, aud the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and the herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed is in itself, after his kind; and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day." The work of the third day was, first; the consolidation of the matter of the universe here designated as "the waters under the heavens." Throughout all the regions of space this work of consolidation went on simultaneously. Previous to this third day of creation, no geological changes could have taken place, for the earth had no separate existence. Now, however, they commence, and, as the earth becomes fitted for the existence of life upon it, it is supplied. The second part of the work of this day was the clothing the earth with verdure by the creation of plants in rich abundance; the operations of this day and the fifth are consecutive, for the work of the fourth day extended over a part of each of these days. The third, fifth, and sixth days are the only ones with which geology has anything to do, and, for the manner in which the two records agree, we must refer to the late work of the lameuted Miller, The Testimony of the Rocks, especially to the lecture—the two Records, Mosaic and Geological.

Verses 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th. "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years. And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth; and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, andthe lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day."

It has puzzled many to know why the sun, moon, and stars were not said to be made before the fourth day. If the reader has followed carefully the course of interpretation, he can now see why they are not mentioned before.

The word here rendered made, is not the one which is rendered create, but one which most frequently means constituted, appointed, or set in order. The work, then, of the fourth day was the ordering and arrangement of the motions of the heavenly bodies; and their functions, so far as our earth is concerned, are clearly stated. The undoubted object of this was to guard men against making them objects of divine worship; they were created things, the work of the Deity; and, so far as man was concerned, they were designed to serve his convenience and promote his welfare. Let us now recapitulate the work of the several days, and see how they agree with the teachings of the works of God.

In the beginning, God created the substance of the heavens and the earth, and this substance was without form and void, or, diffused throughout space, it was dark, and the Spirit of God caused a motion to commence in it. God endued a part of it with luminous properties, and a part he left dark; he then caused the light to separate from the dark matter, and named the light matter day, or the warmth-producing matter; and the dark he called night, or the moving-around matter. This constituted the first day. On the second day, he caused the matter of the heavens and the earth, or of the universe, to separate and divide into distinct masses; and to the space, which contained these masses, together with the masses themselves, he gave the name of heaven. This was the work of the second day. On the third day, he caused the masses of matter to become consolidated, and gave to the one which we inhabit, the specific name of earth, and to its collections of waters, seas. He then clothed the earth abundantly with verdure of all kinds, and commenced its preparation for the residence of man upon it; this was the work of the third day. On the fourth day, he arranged the motions of the heavenly bodies, both with reference to the earth and to each other. On the fifth and sixth days, the preparation of the earth for the residence of man was completed, and man was placed upon it. We have thus a clear, definite, and intelligible narrative, which agrees throughout with the teachings of the most perfect science. We have not space now to review the various phenomena of nature which bear us out in the assertion; but those who have studied the subject will understand the full force of the declaration that, if one should seek to give a sketch in the fewest words of the Celestial Mechanism of Laplace, the Cosmos of Humboldt, and the geology of the latest and best authorities, he would do it in the very language of Moses. Here, then, we have presented to us the wonderful spectacle of all the grandest conclusions of science, epitomized, arranged, and accounted for ages ago, at a time when we are accustomed to look upon the world as in its infancy, and when all nations, except the one to which this wonderful writer belonged, were plunged in the darkest and most degrading idolatry. Where did Moses get this knowledge so absolutely perfect? Was it not from God? and is not this chapter, over which such a premature shout of triumph has been sent up, the most convincing proof of the inspiration of the Scriptures? And so it will ever be, no matter what assaults may be made upon it, whether it be in regard to the unity of the race, or some other which shall yet be brought forward, all will prove in the end vain and futile, and the Scriptures will come out of the contest like the three Jews from Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, without even the smell of fire having passed upon them.